

Hebrews 9

Lesson 9 The First Covenant - A Type Of The New

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Key Verse that Summarizes the Chapter

Hebrews 9:24

For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

The point of this chapter is to show that the old priesthood with its covenant was divinely established and divinely annulled. The author had just pointed out from Jeremiah that it was God (“He says”, 8:13) who said a new covenant was coming, thus the old was obsolete. The first verse of this chapter shows the first had ordinances of *divine* service. Thus, the old was divinely established and divinely made obsolete.

When we get through with this chapter there is not a whole lot of information that has not already been touched upon or at least hinted at in previous chapters. So why does the author labor so long in so many chapters driving home the point about the priesthood of Christ? No doubt the prejudice in religious matters (that is always extremely difficult to address) was as strong here as it would be in our own day. Thus, with patient and methodical argumentation our author makes his case.

One of the obstacles that kept some from understanding about the superiority of the priesthood of Christ is the failure to see the first for what God intended it to be – a type or shadow of the real to come. This chapter makes that clear.

The Tabernacle of the First Covenant Pointed to the Better (vv. 1-10)

The tabernacle of the first covenant (vv. 1-5). Why does the author speak of the tabernacle rather than the Temple (which was still standing)? Perhaps for several reasons. One, the tabernacle gave way to the Temple (something more permanent) which shows that it and the whole system was temporary. Second, he goes back to the first sanctuary and Holy Place when all that was intended to be there was there. By the time Solomon dedicated the temple, Aaron’s rod and the pot of manna were missing from the ark (1 Kings 8:9; 2 Chron. 5:10).

The first covenant had ordinances of divine service (v. 1). Again, what the writer said about the old is not said to reject the old (as if it wasn’t from God), but to show that God designed it to be a type of the new. The first had the earthly sanctuary¹ in contrast to the heavenly.

The tabernacle had two compartments (Exo. 26:33). The first part is here called the sanctuary (v. 2) containing the lampstand (Exo. 25:31-40; 26:35; 27:20-21) and the table of showbread (Exo. 25:23-30). The showbread was twelve cakes in two stacks of six (Lev. 24:5-9).

The second part, beyond the second veil, was called the Holiest of all (v. 3; Exo. 26:31-25). The text says concerning the most holy place, “which had the golden censer” (v. 4). This, no doubt, refers to the altar of incense which was actually just outside the veil in the sanctuary (1 Kings 6:22). Some translations render this “golden altar of incense” (ASV, NASV, NIV, ESV). The altar of incense (Exo. 30:1-10) was omitted in the list at verse 2. Thus, this reference (v. 4) is probably it. Furthermore, the text doesn’t say that this “golden censer” was actually

¹ ASV: “a sanctuary of this world”.

inside the Holiest of all. Rather, it “had” the golden censer or altar of incense. That is, it pertained to the Holiest of all or was just outside the veil.

This second part had the ark of the covenant (Exo. 25:10-16) which contained the golden pot of manna, Aaron’s rod that budded and the tablets of the covenant (v. 4). Over the top of the ark were two cherubims (Exo. 25:17-22) that overshadowed the mercy seat.²

Services of the first pointed to the better (vv. 6-10). The point of these verses is to show that what took place in the service of the first tabernacle was a figure of the better to come. Services of the first tabernacle involved the priests going into the sanctuary to perform their services (v. 6). Their work included keeping the lamps burning (Exo. 27:20-21), burning incense morning and evening (Exo. 30:7-8), changing the loaves every Sabbath (Lev. 24:5-8), and sprinkling blood before the altar (Lev. 4:6).

Only the high priest entered the second part (Holiest of All) which he did once a year (Lev. 16)³. He took the blood of bulls and goats and entered the Holiest of All to offer the blood for himself and the people (v. 7).

The first was a figure of the better to come (vv. 8-10). The fact that only the high priest could enter through the veil, demonstrated that the way into the Holiest of All (heaven) had not been made known (v. 8). When Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). Thus, the way (through his death) had been made known.

The services of the first tabernacle were merely symbolic (“figure” KJV, ASV) of something greater to come (v. 9). The sacrifices offered then could not perfect the conscience (could not completely purge the sin) because the sins were remembered again every year (cf. 10:3).

The first covenant and service “concerned only”⁴ with food, drinks, various washings and fleshly ordinances (v. 10). Rather than being able to make the conscience clean, the old law dealt with what could and could not be eaten (Lev. 11), drinks (perhaps the drink offerings of Numbers 28), and various washings (which included the high priest washing on the day of atonement – Lev. 16:4, 24). These were all fleshly or carnal ordinances. “They pertained to ‘fleshly’ issues rather than to those things which purify the inner man, in this instance, the conscience (see also 7:5 and 15).”⁵

The first was temporary for it was to last until the time of reformation or change (the time of Christ, cf. v. 11).

2 The mercy seat is where man met with God (Exo. 25:22). The word translated “mercy seat” is translated “propitiation” (Rom. 3:25).

3 That doesn’t mean that he only made one trip through the veil on that day. In fact, he made at least three trips. First, he entered with incense (Lev. 16:12-13). Second, he entered with the blood of the bullock (Lev. 16:14). Third, he entered with the blood of a goat (Lev. 16:15).

4 ESV: “deal only with” and ASV: “being only (with meats, drinks and divers washings) carnal ordinances”.

5 Daniel H. King, Sr., *The Book of Hebrews*, Truth Commentaries, 270.

Eternal Redemption by a Greater High Priest and Tabernacle (vv. 11-14)

Christ is the High Priest of a greater tabernacle (v. 11). The first tabernacle and priesthood pointed to the priesthood of Christ and a more perfect tabernacle (not made by human hands as the first). This priesthood can do what the first could not.

Eternal redemption (vv. 12-14). The sacrifice of Christ was also a blood sacrifice, but not the blood of animals (v. 12). Rather, he entered through the veil⁶ with his own blood, by which he obtained eternal redemption.⁷ The author argues that if the blood of bulls and goats with the ashes of a heifer⁸ could accomplish an outward purifying⁹, how much more could the blood of Christ (who is eternal in his nature – deity, and without spot) cleanse the conscience from dead works¹⁰ (vv. 13-14).

Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant (vv. 15-22)

The previous chapter had introduced the idea that the change in the priesthood and the law means a change in the mediator (8:6). Here the author expands on that concept.

By his death (vv. 15a, 16-17). The death of Christ is the means by which the New Covenant became effective and Christ is made the mediator of it (v. 15a). The author illustrates with a will or testament (vv. 16-17). When one writes a will, it is not effective until the person dies. It has no force at all while the testator lives. So, the last will and testament of Christ became effective by his death.

Obtained redemption for those under the first covenant (v. 15b). Through his death, Christ obtained eternal redemption for those who lived under the first covenant (cf. Rom. 3:25). The point is to show how effective the sacrifice of Christ is in contrast to the sacrifices under the old covenant. Those sacrifices could not take away the sin of those who lived under the old. However, the sacrifice of Christ can do more than temporarily remove the sin, it obtained eternal redemption for those in the future and those that came before.

New covenant dedicated by blood like the first (vv. 18-22). The point here is that just as the Old Covenant was dedicated (inaugurated, ESV, NASV) by blood, so the New Covenant was dedicated by the blood of Christ. The writer is referring to the account in Exodus 24:1-8.¹¹

6 Not only did Jesus die for our sins, but he had to be raised to offer his blood in heaven. That is the sense in which we are saved by his life (Rom. 5:10). He was raised for our justification (Rom. 4:25).

7 The redemption is eternal in contrast to the inability of the first to completely take away sin (10:3). Through the blood of Christ, God will remember the sin no more (8:12). Christ is the author of eternal salvation (5:9).

8 The ashes of a heifer were used in the water of purification (Num. 19:2-10).

9 That is the purification accomplished under the old never was complete – the conscience was never cleansed.

10 Dead works are works (actions) that lead to death. All sin does that.

11 Comparing Exodus 24 with Hebrews 9, one will notice some difference. Exodus does not mention goats. Exodus says that Moses put half the blood on the altar and half on the people (24:6, 8), whereas Hebrews says he also sprinkled it on the book (v. 19). Exodus does not mention the water, scarlet wool and hyssop. Both texts are recorded by inspiration and can be harmonized.

Let us not miss the main point while focusing on the differences. "The essential part of the whole ceremony being the 'blood-shedding,' it is of no importance for the general argument that the account in Exodus is not exactly followed."¹²

The tabernacle was sprinkled as well (v. 21). This had to be at a different time than the covenant being dedicated because the tabernacle was not yet built (Exo. 40).¹³

The writer adds, "almost all things were purified with blood" (v. 22) since there were some things purified by water and fire (Num. 31:22-24; Lev. 15:10). Yet one thing that always required blood was the sacrifice for sin – "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (v. 22). The reason being - that life is in the blood (Lev. 17).

The Better and Perfect High Priest (vv. 23-28)

Christ entered into heaven (Holiest of All) for us (vv. 23-24). If that which is the copy of the true had to be purified with blood (v. 22), the heavenly things¹⁴ should be purified with better sacrifices (v. 23). Thus, Christ has entered into the Holiest of All (heaven) to offer his sacrifice before God (v. 24).

Christ offered a one-time sacrifice (vv. 25-28). The high priests under the Old Covenant made their sacrifices often (every year) with the blood of another – an animal (v. 25). In contrast, at the end of the ages,¹⁵ Christ offers his sacrifice *once* with this own blood (v. 26). Just as every man dies once, so Christ dies once (vv. 27-28). There is no need for him to suffer again.

To those who eagerly wait for him, he will appear a second time for salvation. That is, when the second coming occurs he will complete his work by taking his faithful to heaven. He will come "apart from sin" (v. 28). That is, he will not come to bear the sin of man for that work was accomplished with his first coming.

Use of the Old Testament in this Chapter	
Verse in Chapter 9	Old Testament Reference
v. 20	Exodus 24:8

12 H. D. M. Spence-Jones, *Hebrews*, 234. *Pulpit Commentary*, London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

13 Exodus 40 does not mention the use of blood, only the anointing with oil.

14 This is a reference to the spiritual in contrast to the fleshly. "It is not that heaven itself is or was in a state of impurity, but rather that sinful men cannot gain access to that holy place until their sin problem has been permanently resolved" (King, *ibid.*, 288-289).

15 In the last days (cf. 1:2).

Questions

1. Why does the author speak of the tabernacle rather than the Temple (which was still standing)?
2. What is the significance of the mercy seat?
3. What did the Holy Spirit indicate and how did he indicate it?
4. What is the time of reformation (v. 11)?
5. What did Jesus passing through the veil into the Holiest of All have to do with our salvation (v. 12)?
6. How did Jesus become the mediator of the New Covenant?
7. Why were blood sacrifices offered?
8. What is the point of verse 27? How does man dying once fit the context?
9. What is the author saying when he uses the expression "apart from sin" (v. 28)?
10. What is the main point of chapter 9?